

THE LITERARY LANTERN

BY CARO GREEN RUSSELL

Donald Davidson, in the preface of his new book, "Attack on Leviathan" (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, \$3.) says that to deal adequately with the subject of regionalism and sectionalism in the United States would "require a lifetime of travel and investigation and would call for a combination of special skills . . . such as I cannot claim to possess . . ."

This being so we must conclude that Mr. Davidson has not dealt adequately with the subject in this book. He frankly confesses that he has not. But this incompleteness is not so disappointing as the author's confused emotionalism and contentiousness. He seems vexed with almost every "liberal" that ever came out of the South—from Walter Hines Page to Gerald Johnson. He criticises the "metropolitan attack" as on the South, that is, such critics as H. L. Mencken and Van Wyck Brooks, as being so ill-informed as to think that "Puritanism, Methodism, and Victorianism were precisely the same thing. Nearly all the critics were anti-religious; nearly all preferred an aesthetic judgment to a moral one," he says.

Mr. Davidson believes that this country is more likely to endure as a nation if its regionalism is recognized and maintained than if it grew into one huge uniform leviathan. One must ask him why he considers it even possible for a country as enormous and varied in climate and geography as is ours ever to become uniform. It couldn't if it tried. It seems to us that Mr. Davidson is suffering from imaginary fears. He has, like the philosophers, posed a problem in order to solve it. Everyone knows there is a North, a South, an East and a West in this nation. So long as natural conditions in these separate regions remain so different we are not likely to have a stodgy similarity. Vermont can never be Georgia; a Charlestonian will never be taken for a native of Brooklyn, nor even Syracuse. Why does Mr. Davidson doubt that the same conditions that produced regionalism will not maintain it?

As for those who criticise, analyze and make broad pronouncements about the South—what possible harm can they do? The unfair and ignorant ones can be ignored; the others should be welcomed. Criticism is needed everywhere. Especially does the South need it. But, as we heard someone say recently, it has never been given proper respect below the Potomac.

Evidently Mr. Davidson's chief reasons for rising to the defense of the South are these: he is a native southerner and he loves the South with the unreasoning fervor of a mother's devotion to an ailing child. He cannot be objective about it; he cannot state clearly and definitely why he nurses such a grievance against the "metropolitans." It seems simply that he has a nostalgia for the old plantation days, the quiet dignity that often went with agrarian life. But those days are gone and no one can turn back the clock.

We have been reading some of Mr. Davidson's poetry. When a man can write a poem like his "An Outland Piper" he should not waste his time gathering facts and statistics on the state of the nation. He should write more poems.

What the South needs is not defenders. It needs a way to make a living, educate its children and keep them at home where they can do the most good. When it gets these things, if it ever does, the critics can criticise as much as they like and no one, not even Mr. Davidson, need get vexed with them.

Jonathan Daniels' book, "A Southerner Discovers the South," is announced by Macmillan for publication on July 12.

Mr. Daniels, who is editor of the Raleigh "News and Observer," and southern "as far back as there have been Europeans in the South's lost woods and waters," made up his mind to find out the truth about the South. So he climbed into his car and rode the highroads and back roads from Maryland to the Gulf, and here he tells what he saw and gives some candid opinions about it.

He talked with governors and sharecroppers, labor leaders and mill workers. "I had nothing against history," he writes, "but I was more interested in the mixture of hunger and hilarity from which has been compounded so much of the life and drama of the South."

Mr. Daniels is in every way equipped to write a good book about the South and we shall be much surprised if he has not done it.

Lambert Davis, native of Lynchburg, Va., has been appointed editor of the trade books department of the Bobbs-Merrill publishing company.

He was educated at Georgia School of Technology and the University of Virginia. He received his master of arts degree from the University of Virginia in 1926, and began his editorial career immediately thereafter, working for Street and Smith as editorial assistant. In 1927 he became managing editor of Popular Radio, and in 1928 of Radio Broadcast. He was managing editor of the Virginia Quarterly Review from 1928 to 1933, and since 1935 has been full editor.

Thus the South has educated another good man and let him escape to the North. The reason is plain. The South does not keep many of its talented men and women because it cannot offer them opportunities equal to those of the North. And so long as they leave, who is left here to build up the opportunities? It looks like a circle that will be hard to break into.

The state of Virginia is rich in early American history and the city of Richmond is its focal point. Marylou Rhodes, a native Georgian, has written a compact and practical guidebook which she calls "Landmarks of Richmond." (Garrett and Massie, Richmond, \$1.).

"I gathered these bits of Richmond's history for my own use as I piloted visiting friends on 'sight-seeing tours,'" she writes, "and these I want to share with others who may not have the time to go as deeply into the matter as I."

The descriptions and historical information are briefly and concisely stated. She begins with the discovery of The Falls and comes up to the present time. The museums and shrines are covered and a visit to them, Miss Rhodes says, is the only way by which one may "really appreciate Richmond's historic atmosphere and the culture of former generations." The book is well illustrated with photographs.

In the summer issue of "The Virginia Quarterly Review" (University of Virginia; 75 cents) John Peale Bishop has an article entitled, "The Discipline of Poetry." One short paragraph we quote for its statement regarding the arts:

"The aim of all the arts is to present the conflict of man with time. This is as true for those arts, like architecture, which we ordinarily call spatial, as it is for those arts which, like music, are strictly temporal. And the famous release which the arts afford is essentially a release from time. In the western world this is brought about by an assertion of control, in the East apparently by providing an escape from the inescapable; for there the arts aim to bring the listener or the beholder into a state of beatitude in which there is no longer an awareness of time and its duration."

Another idea worth thinking about is this: "The function of rhythm is to convey to us a sense of duration, which in itself is a frightening thing; in order that it should also be a source of delight, it is necessary, not only that it should be controlled at every point, but that it should come to an end."

It is about as thinkable as Einstein's relativity theory.

—CHAPEL HILL.

The long awaited motion picture based on Lloyd C. Douglas's novel "White Banners" is soon to be released by Warner Brothers. Directed by Ermund Goulding, the cast includes such stars as Claude Rains and Fay Bainter. Mr. Douglas's publishers, Houghton Mifflin company, announce his next novel, "Disputed Passage," for publication in January.